Seminar Leader: Mike Pardun

**Summary:**

Emphasis was placed on the importance of establishing a community and partnership within the school environment. We discussed our definition of community and partnership and how important these terms are when in a leadership position in a school building. I really liked Mike’s statement about the difference between a leader and a good leader being that of having the ability to understand another person’s perspective. The characteristics of partnership and community are very similar. As a future school leader it is important to understand the relationship piece in a partnership as well as a community when working towards a common goal. Relationships are what build community and partnerships. Mike shared the Denison board’s goal: to focus on building and maintaining strong relationships and good communication between all people both in and out of the district. In order to accomplish the work of a district the impact of relationships is imperative. It takes time and work to develop positive communication and can be hindered in an instance.

Mike shared examples of how to reach out to the community. Some of those examples are newsletters, phone calls, emails, website, school improvement meetings, blogs, board meetings, Facebook, Twitter, parent/teacher conferences, all communication from within the central office, special events, business partnerships, parent meetings, civic groups, etc. Your best connection to the community is your staff. Staff will talk to the community about what is happening in the community. It is important that you understand as a leader the importance of your staff and their perspectives. Paying attention to this influence and addressing this issue with your staff is important. Staff must be aware of the importance of what they are saying out in the community and how it shapes perspective.

It is very important that you are very proactive in trying to build a sense of community within your staff and amongst your community. By being proactive you can defuse some of the problems that some districts face with issues. Communication is key and the more information you push out to your parents and community the better relationships you will have. It is also important that you also attempt to use a variety of methods to communicate with your public. Radio, newsletters, Facebook and Twitter will meet a variety of age groups with a similar message.

**Reflection:**

This was a very good session to help broaden my understanding of the importance of community as a building leader. I gained a good understanding of how community and partnerships can be developed with intentionality in a positive and proactive way. I was surprised about how important and how intentional Mike was in creating these relationships as a principal and as a superintendent. This would be an area that I would have to be very purposeful in if I were to be a principal. I think it would be important for me to surround myself with others who have a similar vision and passion.

I was very interested in the conversation about the Iowa Core and the importance of involving the community in the process of development and implementation of the Iowa Core. I agree with the struggle of how to engage laymen in the process of developing curriculum. I think it is a matter of degree and level.

Mike was an excellent presenter for the Iowa Principal’s Leadership Academy. It gave me additional information and an enhanced understanding of the importance of addressing and including the community. Mike emphasizes the importance of living the community involvement piece within your everyday routines.